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Use of Electronic Information Resources by University Lecturers in Edo State, Nigeria

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Introduction

The limited access to up-to-date materials in university libraries in Nigeria is a main problem that impedes research and teaching. In the last couple of years, lecturers in Nigerian tertiary institutions have increasingly demanded and preferred access to electronic sources delivery and networked information from their respective libraries (Covi & Cragin, 2004). Timely information is required by all categories of people in the different organizations of the society and one of such organizations is the university. University lecturers equip students with skills in reading, inquiry and independent thinking and strive to develop students' creativity, insight and analytical skills. All these necessitate seeking and use of information from various sources such as books, journals, periodicals, to mention a few.

University education is changing rapidly (Toner, 2008). Bennet (2003) identified a major shift in education- The revolution in information technology is changing delivery of education. This dramatic change includes the way in which information is provided to the university community. Universities through a number of ways embrace the electronic provision of information to facilitate study programmes and research. With the integration of online information services, electronic books, electronic document delivery services and digital libraries in its library systems, university lecturers can now access information from various sources.

Electronic information resources include resources that are available and can be accessed electronically through such computer-networked facilities as online library catalogues, the internet and World Wide Web, digital libraries and archives, government portals and websites, CD-ROM databases, online academic databases such as Medline Online, or commercial databases such as LEXIS and NEXIS (Ekwelem, 2009).

The objectives of this study are to:

i. identify the benefits the university lecturers in Edo State derive from using electronic information resources;

ii. find out the available facilities for using electronic information resources by the university lecturers in Edo State.

Arising from the objectives, the following research questions were raised to guide this study:

i. What are the benefits derived from the use of electronic information resources by the university lecturers in Edo State?

ii. What are the available facilities for using electronic information resources by the university lecturers?

Literature Review

According to Ani and Ahiazu (2008), the emergence of electronic information resources has tremendously transformed handling and management of information in Nigerian academic environments, and university libraries in particular. These dramatic changes include the way in which information is provided to the university communities. Parameshwar and Patil (2010) identified the facilities used by faculty members and research scholars at Gulbarga University to include "departmental computer laboratory, university e-library, personal computers at home, personal computers in the office and some handheld devices such as android, palmtops and blackberry". Similarly, Ilo and Ifijeh (2010) added that university lecturers in Nigeria accessed electronic information resources from the library media centre, cyber cafes on campus, personal computers at home and handheld devices.

A number of electronic resources initiatives have been put in place in Nigeria to assist in the development, training and use of electronic resources in a number of academic institutions among which are the Mortenson Centre for International Library Programmes acting on behalf of McArthur Foundation to support some selected grantee university libraries in Nigeria; The Electronic Information for Libraries Network (EIFL.Net) and MTN foundation. Their fundamental objective has been to create interfaces with the global knowledge systems (Ani & Ahiazu, 2008).

Recognizing the importance of a new mode of information access, academic librarians took responsibility for automating their libraries. Funding bodies such as the Federal Ministry of Education in Nigeria introduced the Virtual Library Project, which pulls together resources electronically, connecting all the academic libraries in Nigeria, with the hub at the National Universities Commission (Federal Ministry of Education, 2000). Many authors have written about internet connectivity in Nigeria. According to Adeya and Oyeyinka (2002), internet connectivity is far below that of developed countries. This is improving as a result of many universities and other institutions achieving direct access through wireless connections. As access grows, Nigerian researchers, scholars, and the general public will have the opportunity of learning, and doing other activities

via the internet (Adeya & Oyeyinka, 2002). Manir (2007) reported that most of the higher education institutions in Nigeria are connected with the internet at their university computer centres. Most of the universities have a base station with at least a 150 foot mast/station around campus. Jagboro (2003) had also emphasized the emerging reliance and attitude of users to electronic resources. In a study she conducted in some Nigerian universities, it was found that 45.2% of the respondents accessed electronic resources from cyber cafés. Though this attitude, according to her is due to the proximity of cyber cafés to user facilities.

Okello-Obura & Magara (2008) investigated electronic information access and utilization at the East African School of Library and Information Science, Makerere University, Uganda. Out of the 250 targeted students, 190 responded, giving a response rate of 76%. The study revealed that users were satisfied and derived a lot of benefits from electronic resources gaining access to a wider range of information and improved academic performance as a result of access to quality information.

According to Anunobi and Okoye (2009), digital technology has revolutionized not only the way information is packaged, processed, stored, and disseminated but also how users seek and access information. Campbell (2006) observed that numerous creative and useful services have evolved with academic libraries in the digital age: providing quality learning spaces, creative metadata, offering virtual reference services, teaching information literacy, choosing resources and managing resource license, collecting and digitizing archival materials, and maintaining digital repositories.

Bhati (2010) reported that faculty members of Islamia University, Pakistan use electronic information resources for "preparation of lecture notes, gaining subject knowledge, research, leisure, sending short text messages, sports, entertainment, communication, online discussion and for receiving news". Electronic information resources make it possible for users to have access to large volumes of information irrespective of their geographical location (Adika, 2003). Okonofua (2008) also lamented that the inadequacy of current and relevant information for teaching, learning and research had been the bane of university education in Nigeria. It was in this light that electronic information resources were introduced into the educational system to bridge the prevailing information gap. Electronic information resources have become an integral part of university education as they play an indisputable role in meeting information and communication needs of staff and students.

Electronic information resources have made it possible for scholars at different locations on the globe to exchange ideas on various fields of study and also allow students and lecturers to communicate both within and across international borders (Luambano & Nawe, 2004). Commenting on the advantages of electronic information resources, Dadzie (2005) wrote that "electronic information resources are invaluable research tools that complement the print-based resources in a traditional library setting". Their advantages according to her include: access to information that might be restricted to the user due to geographical location or finances, access to more current information, and provision of extensive links to additional resources related contents. This rapid emergence and development of electronic information technologies therefore makes it possible to envision radically different ways of organizing the collection and services the library has traditionally provided. While libraries approach a crisis point in financing collection development, these new technologies offer possible ways to mitigate cost and revolutionize ways to access information. Speedy access to publications and availability on the desktop are the key advantages that attract research scholars.

Electronic information sources offer today's lecturers different opportunities from their predecessors. Brophy (1993) detailed the advantages of networking for the user as being: "the information needed can be delivered from the most appropriate source to the user; the user can re-specify his or her need dynamically. The information is obtained when it is wanted, so becomes just in time rather than just in case; the user selects only the information needed to answer the specific question and finally, the information is only stored should the user wish". Electronic information can therefore provide a number of advantages over traditional print-based sources. These advantages according to Ray & Day (1998) include the fact that electronic information sources are often faster than consulting print indexes, especially when searching retrospectively, and they are more straightforward when wishing to use combination of keywords. They open up the possibility of searching multiple files at one time, a feat accomplished more easily than when using print equivalents. Electronic resources can be printed and searches saved to be repeated at a later date. They are updated more often than printed tools. One main advantage especially to distance learners or those with limited time to access the library is their availability from outside the library by dial-up access. The importance and wide ranging scope of electronic resources for general communication, information retrieval and instructional delivery to support teaching and research activities in tertiary educational institutions is acknowledged world wide (Ray & Day, 1998).

Research Methodology

This study utilized the descriptive survey method of research design. The questionnaire was the instrument for data collection. The population consisted of all the lecturers in four universities in Edo State, comprising of Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma, Benson Idahosa University, Benin city, Igbinedion University, Okada and University of Benin, Benin city. A sample of 380 lecturers was drawn from two faculties in the universities using the purposive sampling technique. Three hundred and eighty (380) copies of questionnaire were distributed to lecturers in the four universities. Of these numbers, 313 were duly completed and retrieved.

Data Analysis and Discussion

Results and Discussion

The analysis of data pertaining to the universities which the lecturers belong to is shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Institutions of the respondents

Institutions	Number of respondents	Percentage
University of Benin, Benin city.	108	35
Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma.	98	31
Igbinedion University, Okada.	60	19
Benson Idahosa University, Benin city.	47	15

Total	313	100

Table 1 shows the number of lecturers used in the institutions selected for the study. It indicates that majority of the respondents that is 108 (35%) lecturers responded from the University of Benin, Benin city, 98 (31%) lecturers responded from Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma, 60 (19%) responded from Igbinedion University, Okada, while 47 (15%) lecturers responded from Benson Idahosa University, Benin city.

The gender of the respondents is shown in Table 2

Table 2: Gender distribution of the respondents

Gender	No. of respondents	Percentage
Male	242	77
Female	71	23
Total	313	100

Table 2 reveals that 242 (77%) males and 71 (23%) females respectively constitute the gender distribution for the study. It is evident from the above that majority of the respondents were males.

The analysis of data regarding the job status of the respondents is shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Job status of the lecturers.

Job status	No. of respondents	Percentage
Graduate assistant	21	6.7
Assistant lecturer	59	19
Lecturer II	72	23
Lecturer I	65	21
Senior lecturer	36	11.5
Reader	32	10
Professor	28	9
Total	313	100

Table 3 shows that 21 (6.7%) of the respondents were graduate assistants, 59 (19%) were assistant lecturers, 72 (23%) were lecturers II, 65 (21%) were lecturers I, 36

(11.5%) were senior lecturers, 32 (10%) were readers, while 28 (9%) were professors. It is shown from the analysis that majority of the respondents were lecturers II.

Benefits derived from using electronic information resources by lecturers are depicted in Table 4

Table 4: Benefits derived from using electronic information resources by university lecturers

Benefits from using electronic information resources	Agree		Disagree		Undecided		Total
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	%
Research	306	98	7	2	-	-	100
Subject knowledge	295	94	-	-	18	6	100
Preparation of lectures/ teaching notes	271	87	42	13	-	-	100
News	230	73	83	27	-	-	100
Leisure	190	61	123	39	-	-	100
Entertainment	189	60	124	40	-	-	100
Communication	160	51	153	49	-	-	100
Online discussions	150	48	163	52	-	-	100
Sending short SMS	144	46	169	54	-	-	100
Sports	111	35	202	65	-	-	100
Commercial	96	31	217	69	-	-	100

Table 4 shows the benefits derived from using electronic information resources by university lecturers in Edo state. It revealed that they are predominantly used for research with 306 (98%) respondents as it ranked highest. In a descending order, they are used to gain subject knowledge, with 295 (94%) respondents, for preparation of lectures/teaching notes with 271 (87%), for news with 230 (73%), for leisure with 190 (61%) and for entertainment with 189 (60%) respondents and for communication with 160 (51%) respondents. This finding is in conformity with Husain (2006) who revealed that electronic resources are mostly used for communication, research and publication by saving time and finding up-to-date information, and cooperate with their colleagues.

It also aligned with Mulla (2011) who examined the use of electronic resources by faculty members in HKBK, India. The finding revealed that all the faculty members used electronic information resources for finding relevant information in their

specialization and teaching purpose, followed by 58% of faculty members who used it for research purpose and for subject and general knowledge. This finding is also supported by Renwick (2005), who found that most faculty members used e-resources for research and professional growth. Similarly, Bhati (2010) had reported that faculty members of Islamia University, Pakistan showed enthusiastic attitude towards the use of electronic information resources for teaching and research purposes. Manmart (2001) found that e-resources are used by academic staff as a tool for teaching preparation, research and academic work.

The available facilities for using electronic information resources are identified in Table 5.

Table 5: Available facilities for using electronic information resources

Available facilities for using e-resources	Agree		Disagree		Undecided		Total
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	%
Departmental computer laboratory	86	27	227	73	-	-	100
The university's e-library	250	80	63	20	-	-	100
Personal computers at home	301	96	12	4	-	-	100
Personal computers in the office	91	29	222	71	-	-	100
Faculty computer laboratory	38	12	275	88	-	-	100
Institution's ICT centre	241	77	72	23	-	-	100
Cyber cafes on campus	62	20	251	80	-	-	100
Cyber cafes outside campus	74	24	239	76	-	-	100
Hand held devices (smart phones and palm tops)	280	89	33	11	-	-	100
Neighbouring institutions' ICT centre	11	4	205	65	97	31	100

Table 5 has to do with the available facilities for using electronic information resources by university lecturers in Edo State. Personal computers at home were the highest with 301 (96%) respondents. Hand-held devices such as smart phones and palmtops followed with 280 (89%) respondents. While the university's e-libraries with 250 (80%) respondents and the institution's ICT centre with 241 (77%) respondents followed respectively. This finding is supported by Manhas (2010) who revealed that majority of the dental teachers and students have their own personal computers and laptops at home. However, Mahajan (2010) contradicted this finding when he stated that 80% of researchers in Panjab University use the electronic information resources provided in their respective departments. Parameshwar & Patil (2010) reported most

academics at Gulbarga University access electronic information resources from their departmental computer laboratory and from offices.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study concludes that the university lecturers in Edo State derive several benefits from the use of electronic information resources. However, the available facilities for using electronic information resources are not encouraging. Except for the fact that university lecturers have personal computers at home coupled with handheld devices and the universities' e-libraries, the universities do not have departmental computer laboratories not to talk of personal computer at their offices.

The researchers provided the following recommendations:

i. The university managements should provide well equipped computer laboratories for all the departments and provide personal computers in the university lecturers' offices.

ii. The university managements should provide funds for subscription to more primary and secondary electronic sources. Reasonable investment should be made on the university's e-library so as to be able to subscribe to several databases and provide internet services to lecturers free of charge.

iii. There is the urgent need for all the universities in Edo State to be properly funded by their financiers (federal and state governments as well as private organizations). Huge financial investment in ICTs by the universities will positively impact on the lecturers.

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